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R 211134Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9270
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9978
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3767
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4381
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0259
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2233
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0909
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0307
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0236
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0224
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2348
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1004
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS TASHKENT 000236

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SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: RELEASE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS REPORTED

REF: TASHKENT 167 (NOTAL)

11. (SBU) Summary: Independent and opposition websites report the release of two human rights activists, Bobomurod Mavlanov and Sanjar Umarov. The reports have not yet been independently verified. End summary.

Bobomurod Mavlanov

12. (SBU) Post reported reftel that human rights activist Bobomurod Mavlanov's name appeared on an amnesty list February 6. Independent website Ferghana.ru reported February 20 on an interview with Mavlanov and confirmed that he has been released. Human Rights Watch researcher Igor Vorontsov told us he also has heard Mavlanov has been released but had not received positive confirmation. Tashkent-based human rights activist Surat Ikramov, likewise, was unable to confirm but promised to inquire with relatives and opposition Erk party members (Mavlanov is an Erk Central Council member). We were unable to reach Erk's senior representative in Tashkent, Atanazar Aripov, for confirmation.

13. (SBU) According to Ferghana.ru, Mavlanov credited the recent thaw in relations with the West for his release. As we reported reftel, his release was one of several announced in conjunction with Uzbek-EU consultations in early February. According to the report, Mavlanov nonetheless questioned the wisdom of that thaw. The report did not elaborate on his criticism.

14. (SBU) According to the report, Mavlanov claimed that authorities treated him well in prison: "They never had me beaten or harassed, and [they] talked politely." He also reportedly denied his membership in the opposition Erk party: "I had never worked against the authorities or been in the opposition. I always cooperated with law enforcement agencies."

15. (SBU) Harakat.net (the e-newspaper of the Birlik opposition party), also reports that Mavlanov has been released. Harakat attributes its information to Samarqand Region Birlik party member Kholiqnazar Ghaniev.

Sanjar Umarov

16. (SBU) The website also reported that activist Sanjar Umarov may have been released, but on condition that he leave the country quietly and quickly. Post reported reftel that human rights activists with whom we have spoken have been unable to visit Umarov in recent weeks and assumed he remained in jail. Activist Surat Ikramov had no information but promised to inquire.

17. (SBU) Post will report if and when we are able to verify these reports.

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